

1 **TESTIMONY**
2 **BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,**
3 **JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY**
4 **36th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**
5 **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2026**
6 **THE PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING**
7

8 Good day Honorable Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr., Chairman of the
9 Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, members of
10 the 36th legislature, legislative staff, ladies and gentlemen in the chamber,
11 members of the media, and our viewing and listening audience.
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13 As Executive Director of the Peace Officer Standards and Training
14 Council, I support this bill establishing a Police Reserve Unit within the
15 Virgin Islands Police Department. It offers VIPD additional personnel to
16 meet community needs while retaining the experience of qualified former
17 and retired officers. Its success requires a clear commitment to POST
18 certification, training, and accountability.
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20 A well-managed reserve unit can help VIPD address staffing shortages,
21 respond to emergencies, support special events, and strengthen
22 community outreach. Reserve officers can also provide mentoring and
23 administrative or technical support, allowing full-time officers to devote
24 more time to frontline duties. These benefits depend on qualified
25 personnel, appropriate assignments, and effective supervision.
26

27 POST provides the professional foundation for this effort. Under title 23,
28 chapter 16, and its administrative rules, the Council establishes and
29 administers standards for qualification, certification, training, and

continued compliance. Rules 204-X-1-.15 and 204-X-1-.16 define the Council's oversight responsibilities and require agencies to cooperate, conduct background investigations, and ensure required training. This partnership protects the public and gives VIPD a reliable basis for determining who is prepared to exercise police authority.

That protection must extend across the board. Whether an individual serves as a regular police officer, auxiliary officer, or reserve officer, the training and safeguards must match the authority and responsibilities of the position. I support preserving the existing Police Auxiliary and requiring any auxiliary officer seeking reserve appointments to independently meet the reserve program's eligibility, certification, training, and service requirements. Appointment as an auxiliary officer should not automatically grant the police powers authorized for reserve officers.

I recommend one essential clarification: POST must retain authority to determine certification and the equivalency of credentials from other jurisdictions. The bill should resolve its differing equivalency provisions by requiring Council review, consistent with Rule 207-X-4-.03. The Commissioner should retain authority over appointment, assignments, supervision, and Department discipline. Together, these responsibilities provide both operational control and independent verification of qualifications.

Active reserve officers must meet applicable POST requirements for continuing education, recertification, and firearms qualification. The bill's service-hour requirement should not substitute for required training. Prior service and retirement status should receive appropriate consideration under the rules, while readiness for active assignments must

be verified. POST and VIPD should establish a lawful certification pathway for part-time and volunteer applicants.

Implementation and Accountability

If enacted, the program should be implemented jointly by VIPD and POST. Before deployment, the agencies should document applicant review, certification verification, training needs, and operational readiness. Written policies must define permitted duties, supervision, emergency activation, and restrictions on off-duty action. Every exercise of police authority must comply with the law, the officer's certification status, and Department authorization.

POST must have the capacity to review credentials and monitor compliance as the program expands. These resources are essential to maintaining a reserve roster that is trained and ready for safe deployment.

I support the bill's annual reporting on staffing, duty hours, training compliance, operational benefits, complaints, and liability claims. This accountability will help the Legislature determine whether the unit is meeting its purpose and whether additional resources or statutory adjustments are needed.

Chairman Joseph and members of the Committee, I urge your favorable consideration and approval of Bill No. 36-0318, with clear protection of POST's authority and applicable standards. This measure can expand VIPD's capacity and preserve valuable experience. Every officer entrusted with police power must be qualified, prepared, and accountable. POST's continued oversight will help ensure that commitment is upheld throughout the Territory.

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91 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any
92 questions the Committee may have.

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